

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 OMB-01
TRSE-00 XMB-02 AID-05 DOE-15 SOE-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /120 W
-----117437 172033Z /62

R 151000Z JUN 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6338
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1244

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IN, IZ, CE
SUBJ: VISIT OF IRAQI VICE PRESIDENT TO INDIA AND SRI LANKA

REF COLOMBO 2698 (NOTAL)

1. LOCAL SOURCE WHO FOLLOWS IRAQI RELATIONS WITH SOUTH ASIA CONFIRMS THAT VICE PRESIDENT MAAROUF HAS TENTATIVE SCHEDULE TO VISIT SRI LANKA JULY 3-5. VISIT WOULD FOLLOW A PLANNED TRIP TO INDIA JULY 1-3. MAAROUF IS NOT A BAATH PARTY MEMBER NOR DOES HE PARTICIPATE IN INNER GROUP OF LEADERSHIP, BUT HE IS AN AUTHORITATIVE AND TRUSTED SPOKESMAN FOR THE REGIME. MAAROUF IS THE SENIOR KURDISH OFFICIAL IN THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT.

2. IRAQI RELATIONS WITH INDIA ARE RECOVERING FROM A PERIOD OF DISTRUST WHICH FOLLOWED THE OUSTER OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER GHANDI, TO WHOM IRAQIS HAD FELT IDEOLOGICALLY
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CLOSE. INDIA AND IRAQ HAVE IMPORTANT AND COMPLICATED RELATIONS. INDIA MAINTAINS A LARGE CONTINGENT OF MILITARY ADVISERS IN IRAQ WHO TRAIN IRAQI FIGHTER PILOTS AND TANK COMMANDERS. REPORTEDLY, INDIANS ALSO SELL AMMUNITION AND SMALL AMOUNTS OF OTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO IRAQ. LARGE NUMBERS OF INDIAN EXPERTS, PERHAPS AS MANY AS 800, WORK IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, AS

AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS, AS PROFESSORS IN IRAQ'S UNIVERSITIES, AND ON A VARIETY OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. THOUSANDS OF OTHER INDIANS WORK AS CLERKS AND LABORERS, AND SEVERAL INDIAN CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES ARE ACTIVE IN IRAQ. INDIA ALSO PROVIDES A SUBSTANTIAL MARKET FOR IRAQI PETROLEUM, ALTHOUGH IN 1977 SALES DECLINED TO AROUND TWO AND ONE-HALF MILLION METRIC TONS. IRAQ AND INDIA HAVE FOR SOME YEARS HAD A JOINT ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COMMISSION WHICH MEETS SEMI-ANNUALLY.

3. IRAQI RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA ARE MORE MODEST, ALTHOUGH THEY CLEARLY SERVE THE INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES. OVER THE YEARS IRAQ HAS BEEN WILLING TO PAY A SMALL ECONOMIC PRICE IN HOPES OF INFLUENCING SRI LANKA'S POSITION ON POLITICAL ISSUES. THE MOST BLATANT EXAMPLE ON THIS WAS A LOAN FOR 17 MILLION DOLLARS TO SRI LANKA SHORTLY BEFORE THE COLOMOB NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT OF 1976. THE PRIMARY ITEM IN TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS SRI LANKAN TEA, VALUED AT APPROXIMATELY 20 MILLION DOLLARS PER ANNUM. IRAQ MAY ALSO EXPORT SMALL AMOUNTS OF PETROLUUM PRODUCTS TO SIR LANKA.

4. TIMING OF MAAROUF TRIP IS PROBABLY CONNECTED WITH POLITICS OF NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. IRAQIS WILL BE WOOING TWO OF THE NON-ALIGNED MODERATES IN PREPARATION FOR UPCOMING FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN BELGRADE. IRAQ
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MAY FIND CONSIDERABLE RESISTANCE TO ITS POSITIONS IN VIEW OF ITS CLOSE COOPERATION WITH CUBANS AT MEETING OF NACB IN HAVANA. MAAROUF VISIT TO INDIA ALSO COMES ONE YEAR AFTER A VISIT WHICH HE MADE TO THE FAR EAST AND PAKISTAN AND MAY BE INTENDED TO RESTORE CENTRALITY OF INDIAN TIES IN IRAQI RELATIONS WITH SOUTH ASIA.
PECK

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VICE PRESIDENT, PRESIDENT, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BAGHDA01244
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780254-0486
Format: TEL
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780658/aaaabxjd.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 70a76088-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 COLOMBO 2698
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2344965
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF IRAQI VICE PRESIDENT TO INDIA AND SRI LANKA
TAGS: PEPR, IN, IZ, CE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/70a76088-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014